

MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAM



MRCs on a Tour of the Cedar River Watershed,
Summer '04. *Photo: D. Batura*

2005 is the fourth year of the partnership between WSU King County Extension (WSU KCE) and King County Solid Waste Division (KCSWD). Over the past four years great progress has been made towards integrating goals and objectives to create a solid partnership with concrete benefits for both agencies. This briefing report will highlight some of the specific activities and successes related to WSU KCE's involvement with the King County Master Recycler Composter Program. Read on to see what we have accomplished in the in first half of 2005.

The purpose of MRC Program is to train and support a cadre of volunteers who supplement KCSWD Waste Reduction/Recycling (WRR) outreach and education activities and are integrated with other Department of Natural Resources and Parks outreach programs. These volunteers provide King County residents with information and personalized assistance to promote waste reduction, recycling, and the efficient use of natural resources.

Overall Program Objectives

WSU Extension's objectives for the Master Recycler Composter Program are to:

- Host continuing educational events for alumni
- Foster a strong sense of community and strengthen communication channels among MRCs
- Increase public awareness of the MRC Program
- Make connections with diverse and underserved communities to support and encourage their interest in resource conservation issues

2005 Continuing Education Events Water Conservation & Reclamation

The first Continuing Education event of the year, held on June 8th, was a great success. Eighteen MRCs attended the Water Conservation & Reclamation Workshop.

Two local experts spoke about the excitement and issues around reclaimed water. Katharine Cupps, Washington State Department of Ecology presented on innovative water projects in Washington State and what the future of reclaimed water looks like. Jo Sullivan with King County Water Reuse Program updated MRC volunteers on water reuse issues in King County as well as what we can do in our own backyards to help protect water quantity as we head into the dry months of summer.

"Reclaimed water" is defined as effluent derived in any part from sewage that has been adequately and reliably treated to a high quality so that it is suitable for beneficial uses. Reclaimed water is no longer considered a wastewater. All reclaimed water must meet the Water Reclamation and Reuse Standards established by the state Departments of Health and Ecology. The standards have stringent requirements to assure adequate treatment and pathogen removal.

Reclaimed water is used for landscape and crop irrigation, industrial processing, heating and cooling, dust suppression and soil compaction, flushing toilets in commercial buildings, wetland enhancement, streamflow augmentation, and groundwater recharge. Reclaimed water is distributed in purple piping, which is the international code designation for reclaimed water distribution systems. Reclaimed water is not intended for drinking.

Helping volunteers bring natural resource information to the public

Wastewater Treatment, Biosolids & Gardens to Envy!

The June continuing education event on reclaimed water sparked a number of questions about the wastewater treatment process and Biosolids. To best answer these questions, we have planned another continuing education event: a tour of the Renton Wastewater Treatment Plant, the adjacent Waterworks Gardens and the brand new King County Demonstration Gardens which will be in high bloom for the event on Saturday, September 17th.

MRC volunteers will have the opportunity to visit the wastewater treatment plant, which is part of King County's regional system that treats wastewater for about 1.4 million people in the Puget Sound region. Every day, South plant treats millions of gallons of wastewater from our region's homes, businesses and industries. MRCs will also be able to get an up-close look at the biosolids recycling process.

We will complete the tour with a visit to the adjacent Waterworks Garden, an 8-acre park that combines public art with stormwater treatment. The park includes basalt columns, a series of garden rooms with native plants, and ponds and wetlands that filter and treat stormwater runoff from the South Treatment Plant.



South Treatment Plant in Renton, WA.

Photo: King County

Continuing Education Evaluation Results

(Scale of 1-5, with 5 as highest)

Average training score: 4.6

Average new information: 3.9

Guest speaker average: 4.6

Average workshop organization – 4.6

Average workshop clarity – 4.6

Average workshop creativity – 4.1

Additional topics of interest indicated by MRCs include:

- Chicken coop tour
- Commercial worm bin tour
- Roof gardens (how to)
- Waste water treatment tour
- Water catchment technology and material sources
- Sod roof
- Rain gardens

Compost Tea: Benefits and Risks

The final continuing education event of the year will focus on compost tea. We will cover the history of compost tea, the brewing processes, and how to apply the product to your plants. We will look at research on the benefits and risks involved with using compost tea in the garden, and the best ways to advise King County residents about utilizing this resource.



MRCs on a tour during a continuing education event.

Photo: D. Batura



Darcy Batura
Extension Educator
206/205-3130 darcy.batura@metrokc.gov

WSU King County Extension
919 SW Grady Way, Suite 120
Renton, WA 98055-2980
<http://www.metrokc.gov/wsucce>